

Apologetics



The Problem of Evil

“If God desires there to be evil in the world, then he is not good. If He does not desire there to be evil, yet evil exists, then He is not omnipotent. Thus, if evil exists God is either not loving or not all-powerful. Evil casts a shadow over God’s love and power. This is no small dilemma, and answers to it are exceedingly difficult.”

John Stuart Mill





“If God were good, he would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty He would be able to do what He wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore God either lacks goodness, or power, or both.’ This is the problem of pain in its simplest form.”

(The Problem of Pain) .

- CS Lewis





“If there is a God, why is there so much evil?”
Augustine

What is evil?

- Evil –
1. Morally reprehensible, arising from actual or imputed bad character or conduct
 2. causing discomfort or repulsion
 3. Causing harm
 4. the fact of suffering, misfortune, and wrongdoing, a cosmic evil force
 5. something that brings sorrow, distress, or calamity

(Merriam- Webster dictionary)

Anything that is bad, from a paper cut to lost of a love one in a murder case or even natural disaster



Moral Evil



Natural Evil

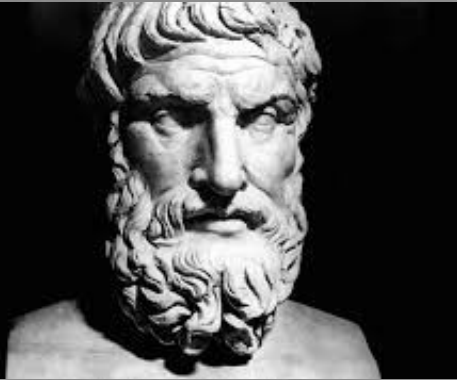


What is “The Problem with Evil”

Contradicts God’s divine attribute

1. Omnipotent – Jer 32:27, Ps 33:9
2. Omniscient – Ps 147:5, 1 Kings 8:39
3. Omni-benevolence – Isa 6, Ps 24:3-5

“God either wishes to take away evils and is unable; or he is able and unwilling; or he is neither willing nor able; or he is both willing and able. If he is willing and unable he is feeble, which is not in accordance with the character of God; if he is able and unwilling, he is envious, which is equally at variance with God; if he is neither willing nor able, he is both envious and feeble, and therefore not God; if he is both willing and able from what source then are evils? Or why does he not remove them?” - Epicurus



Theodicy

the·od·i·cy [thee-od-uh-see] –noun. A vindication of the divine attributes, particularly holiness and justice, in establishing or allowing the existence of physical and moral evil.



Evil is an illusion

Evil is an illusion – it is not real (non-Christian and Eastern Mysticism).

Since evil is just an illusion just as good is an illusion, the way to overcome it is mind over matter. (Buddhist)



Evil is an illusion

Problem:

Human experiences say otherwise. Example: sickness

Evil sometimes does kill you and the fact that you die is evil even if the sickness is illusionary

Objective suffering may, perhaps, coherently be dismissed as illusory, but subjective suffering cannot be.



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Evil is just good in disguise

Romans 8:28 – All things work for the good for those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose

Problems:

1. Romans 8:28 does not say that all things are good, it only says that all things will work for good – for a select group of people (the elect)
2. "Evil is good" fails because it obscures the real difference between good and evil. It is an implicit denial of the reality of evil.



Dualism: God vs. Satan



- God really wants good, but Satan thwarts his purposes and wants evil.
- There exist two ultimate and opposing forces which are equal in power and eternity.
- This view lets God off the hook by making the existence of evil eternally independent of Him. ie God is not responsible for Evil

Problem:

1. Satan and God are not equal in power (Ps 115:3, 135:6; Job 1:9-12)
2. God is in control of everything and is even in control of bad things
 - Lamentations 3:37 – who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it?
 - Amos 3:6 – Is a trumpet blown in a city and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it?
 - Colossians 1:17 – And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together



Evil is just relative

There is no such thing as good or evil; only how you feel about it matters.

There are only social convictions or preferences that masquerade as real values

This is really not a theodicy as it doesn't really seek to justify God – it really just seeks to eliminate Him

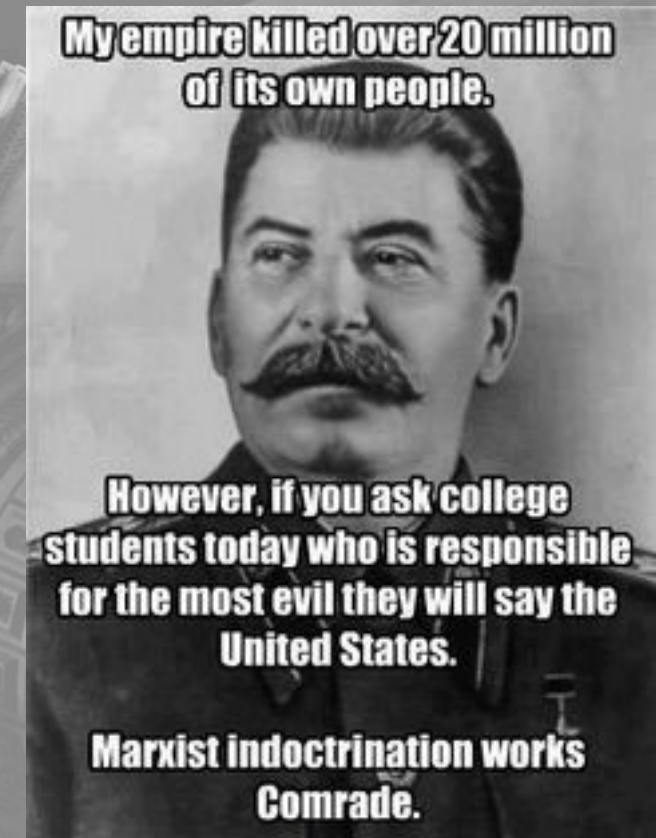
Problem:

If that was true you will have no power to stop anybody from having a subjective worldview and killing you.
Because that is their moral reasoning

It works in a perfect world where people are good and love one another but in the real world it doesn't work. Hence we have our police and courts.



Evil is just relative



Soul Making Theodicy



John Hick

1. Man is not created perfect in Genesis and is still in progress to develop into spiritual maturity
2. The evil and suffering in this world is to help us develop spiritually
3. Free will is needed for genuine love

Problem:

It cannot explain why there are so much evil in this world (Evidential problem of evil)

⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

- 1 Pet 1: 6-7



Free will defense


If genuine love is the ultimate end, free will must be necessary.

God can create a world with free (freely choosing to perform good or evil) creatures or creatures only capable of doing good. But since genuine love is the ultimate end, creatures must be created free.

God could have forestalled the occurrence of moral evil only by removing the possibility of moral good.

Problem:

Resolves the logical problem of evil but not the evidential problem of evil including natural evil



"If a thing is free to be good it is also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having."

- C.S. Lewis,
The Screwtape Letters,
"Mere Christianity"

LDS Liberty





Do we have to give up one of the attributes of God
to resolve the problem of evil?

Can we trust God in the light of evil around us?



Isaiah 55:8-9

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.



You are Here



Who is God in the bible?

God is the all-powerful governor of His Universe

Psalm 115:3 – “Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.”

Genesis 1. God *spoke* and the worlds were created.

Colossians 1. “For by him *all things were created*: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and *in him all things hold together*.”



Who is God in the bible?

God is in control of *every* aspect of His creation

Ephesians 1:11 - “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.”

Psalms 33:15



Who is God in the bible?

God even orchestrates the sins of man to glorify himself (yet is not tainted by them)

Exodus 4:21 – “The LORD said to Moses, “When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.”

Consider the actions of Pilate. The Pharisees. Judas.



Who is God in the bible?

Yet, God is *never* blameworthy for evil that occurs. Those who commit evil are to blame.

James 1:13-14 – “When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.”



Who is God in the bible?

For God is good and holy, and he hates evil

Habakkuk 1:13 – “Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?”

Revelation 4 – “Day and night [the creatures around the throne of God] never stop saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come”



Who is God in the bible?

God judges us. We do not judge God.

Romans 9:19-21—“One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?” But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’ Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?”

Consider the example of Job (chapters 38-41). God’s first question to Job puts things in perspective: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand.”



Who is God in the bible?

God will use evil for an ultimate good purpose (which we may not now fully understand): a “greater good”

Genesis 50:20 – “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

Consider the *crucifixion* of Jesus. The *worst* tragedy of human history is the brutal murder of the *only* perfect man to ever live. But *this* injustice is also the most glorious event of human history – God’s sacrifice of his Son to ransom a people unto himself. Friends, if the ultimate evil can result in the ultimate good, God can use lesser evils in other places and times in history – even in our lives – for our good.



God uses evil

1. Displaying His mercy and justice

Romans 3:26, Romans 5:8, Romans 5:20-21, Romans 9:17

2. Redemption – Christ's sufferings on our behalf.

Paul sees his sufferings for the church and the spread of the gospel as similar to Christ's sufferings. Anytime we witness and are reviled we are suffering for the glory of Christ. Christ (1 Peter 3:18), Paul (Col 1:24), Believers (2 Tim 3:12)



God uses evil

3. Shock value to unbelievers that can gain their attention and promote a change in heart.

We as humans have a tendency to forget God when things are going well. God can use pain and suffering to accomplish this. God may use pain as a megaphone to rouse a deaf world from our complacency.

Deuteronomy Chapter 8

Zech 13:7-9, Luke 13:1-5, John 9

“I am progressing along the path of life in my ordinary contentedly fallen and godless condition...when suddenly a stab of abdominal pain that threatens serious disease...At first I am overwhelmed, and all my little happinesses look like broken toys. Then slowly and reluctantly, bit by bit, I try to bring myself into the frame of mind that I should be at all times, I remind myself that toys were never intended to possess my heart, that my true good is in another world and my only real treasure is Christ.” C.S. Lewis



God uses evil

4. Fatherly discipline of believers

Romans 5: “And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.



A response to evil and suffering

The best response to pain and suffering is found in Jesus Christ. Christianity doesn't say that evil doesn't exist, in fact it addresses the problem of evil directly with Jesus Christ

Peter Kreeft: "Many Christians try to get God off the hook for suffering. God put himself on the hook, so to speak, on the cross."

John Stott: "I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross....in the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it?.....There is still a question mark against human suffering, but over it we boldly stamp another mark, the cross which symbolizes divine suffering."



A response to evil and suffering

God will one day end all suffering and evil and redeem this world

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

– Romans 8:22



Conclusion

The bible doesn't provide an direct answer to the philosophical problem of evil

However....

The bible does provide a response and solution to evil that is Jesus Christ

Instead of moving around the issue of the problem of evil of unbelievers we should tell them of how Jesus, son of God, blameless come to die for the sins of all mankind.

We have a gift of salvation now. What we have to do is the accept it.

